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BUSH BARS PLEDGE ON '76 TICKET SPOT

C.I.A. Nominee Will Not Rule
Out Vice-Presidential Bid
in Senate Testimony

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 15—George Bush, President Ford's choice for Director of Central Intelligence, refused today to pledge, as a prerequisite for Senator confirmation, that he would not accept a nomination as Vice President.

The 51-year-old chief of the United States mission to China told the members of the Armed Services Committee that he could not "in all honesty tell you that I would not accept [the nomination]."

"I don't think any American should be asked to say that he would not accept," he said. Mr. Bush, however, firmly ruled out any political activities while serving as chief of intelligence, including making contributions to political parties.

Approval Appears Certain

Mr. Bush was questioned by the committee members for two and a half hours today and is scheduled to return tomorrow. Committee staff source said that there appeared little doubt that the committee would approve his nomination, but the final vote was expected to be split.

Even if the committee were to approve the nomination this week, it is not expected to reach the Senate floor until January, after the Christmas recess. Several Congressional sources said that the appointment might face a floor fight then.

Three Democrats—Senators Caryl Hart of Colorado, Thomas J. McIntyre of New Hampshire and Patrick J. Leahy of Vermont—appeared from their questions to be the most concerned about Mr. Bush's nomination. The majority of the Republican members of the committee seemed to approve the choice. Senator Harry F. Byrd Jr., Independent Democrat of Virginia, was the only Senator to commit his vote to Mr. Bush.

Senator Church Opposed

The committee will hear opposition to Mr. Bush's nomination tomorrow from Senator Frank Church, the Idaho Democrat who heads the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Mr. Church reiterated in a news conference today his belief that Mr. Bush's political background was "incompatible" with the duties and responsibilities of the Director of Central Intelligence.

Under questioning by Senator Hart today, Mr. Bush said he found assassination of foreign leaders "morally offensive" and that he would not permit the Central Intelligence Agency to become involved in such plots.

But Mr. Bush refused to rule out C.I.A. involvement in plans for military coups d'etat in foreign countries, even in countries with democratically elected governments.

"I would say we should treat very, very carefully with governments that are constitutionally elected," he said.

Nor did Mr. Bush come out against the operation by the C.I.A. of such paramilitary adventures as the war in Laos.

Mr. Bush told the committee that he was concerned about former C.I.A. employees who had disclosed national security matters in the last few months. He said that attention should be given to a recommendation of the Rockefeller commission that persons who make public national security matters should be prosecuted.

Several senators concentrated on whether the nominee could resist pressure from the White House to use his power improperly. Mr. Bush said he would resign if he felt the President was making an improper demand upon him and if he was asked to do something illegal he might also report it to members of Congress.

He strongly opposed, as does the Ford Administration, advising Congress about plans for covert action before the President has made a decision.

Focus of Criticism

The criticism of Mr. Bush's nomination has centered on his political background. He was a Representative from Texas and chairman of the Republican National Committee before being appointed to represent the United States at the United Nations and later in Peking.

Mr. Bush told the committee that he was "proud" of his political service. "SOME OF THE DIFFICULTIES THE C.I.A. has encountered might have been avoided if more political judgment had been brought to bear," he said. "I am not talking about narrow political partisanship. I am talking about the respect for the people and their sensitivities that most politicians understand."

Mr. Bush tried to blunt his opposition by pledging to avoid direct or indirect political activity, speechmaking, attendance at political meetings and political contributions.

"My ability to shut off politics when service in nonpartisan jobs has been demonstrated in two high and sensitive foreign affairs posts," he said.

Senator Henry M. Jackson, Democrat of Washington, did not attend today's session. He is expected to subject Mr. Bush to hard questioning tomorrow.